WORLD CHRONICLE

UNITED NATIONS

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PROGRAMME: **"WORLD CHRONICLE"**

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SYNOPSIS

DRUGS

Giorgio Giacomelli, Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, highlights the need for a more vigorous international approach in the fight against drug abuse. Demand for illicit drugs, he says, has increased in recent years; therefore, effort and cooperation on the international, regional, and sub-regional levels are necessary in order to successfully wage a war aginst the drug epidemic. Mr. Giacomelli also believes that joint efforts and coordination are needed among the different UN agencies in the campaign against drugs.

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VOICE: From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **WORLD CHRONICLE**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns, and this is **WORLD CHRONICLE.**

Over the last few decades, drug abuse has become one of the most dangerous epidemics confronting modern societies. The illicit production and trafficking of drugs, together with attendant violence and corruption, continue to imperil public health in virtually all countries of the world. What must the international community do to tackle this problem?

Our guest today is the drug czar of the United Nations. He is Giorgio Giacomelli, Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. A national of Italy, Mr. Giacomelli will be interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by Ian Steele, of the Press Foundation of Asia; Linda Fasulo, of National Public Radio; and Hector Igarza, of Prensa Latina.

Before we talk to Mr. Giacomelli, let's look at one country's efforts to tackle its drug problem. Our correspondent Steve Whitehouse reports.

WHITEHOUSE:
The narcotics police of Bangkok are on the move. Two informers have revealed the precise site of a dealer's den. The raid will only take a few minutes, but the fight against drug traffic and consumption in Thailand is an endless one.

In recent years, drug abuse and production has risen to epidemic proportions in Southeast Asia. Colombia and its cocaine cartel have grabbed much of the headlines. But heroin coming from Asia's Golden Triangle is solidly regaining ground among western and Asian consumers. In addition to stopping smuggling, the cornerstone of Thailand's strategy against drugs lies in prevention and rehabilitation.

[THAI COMMERCIAL]

A vigorous "just say no" campaign alerts the public through television ads.

Several rehabilitation centres have been established in Bangkok. Here, drug consumers can begin to come to terms with their addiction. They receive methadone detoxification treatment. As hypodermic needles are a major source of infection, AIDS prevention counselling is given. And there's also religious support. This year, 12 former drug addicts were ordained into the Buddhist monkhood. Now, they're giving their support to the many other addicts. The International Labour Organisation, the ILO, has set up a vocational training project and job placement services for Bangkok's quarter million addicts.

MATUSI:
"Unless they go to work and get their money, their earnings, then they cannot achieve a full life. So

READEX
FICHE

ILO's function, we try to encourage or promote their training so that they can get into society."

WHITEHOUSE:
A community group takes the anti-drug message to the streets. It advertises the existence of the rehabilitation centres and the availability of services. School children from all over the country are being taught about the wonders of the human body and the need to keep it drug free. Thailand can claim some progress in the battle against drugs, but the despair of thousands of addicts is a constant reminder that the fight is far from over.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Giacomelli, we've just been told that the fight is far from over. How close are we to making some kind of progress in the fight? Is it a lost battle already, or is it something which you feel that in a few years can be won?

GIACOMELLI: This is not a battle, this is a war. And I don't think we can at all say that it is a lost war, but I think it will be a long one. It is not one episode, it is a feature of modern society. It is a disease which is part and parcel of the brave new world in which we are living. So, rather than setting ourselves targets of success or failure, we have to "do our thing" every day. We have many tools at our disposal. We have to devise new ones, and we have to conduct the struggle with opportunism, organizing our plan in the short, medium and long term, attacking the disease on all sides, and so persevere in the fight.

LITTLEJOHNS: Is this going to require a great deal more money than has been employed so far in the war, as you call it?

GIACOMELLI: It requires as much money as will be available, it requires also the best possible use of money, and it requires also maybe an approach which is not necessarily or uniquely related to the amount of resources you put into it, but a matter of culture and attitude.

LITTLEJOHNS: The illicit drug trade has been said to exceed practically every economic number, apart from armaments.

GIACOMELLI: Armaments, yes.

LITTLEJOHNS: So, in that case, it surely is going to take a huge, huge amount of money, billions of dollars, to make any impact in the campaign against it.

GIACOMELLI: Yes, certainly. But, you see, the amount of money needed to fight drug abuse must not necessarily be seen to match the amount of money which is mobilized by the drug trade. It is a fact that when you dispose or handle such an enormous amount of resources, you have tremendous leverage and means and ways to have your way; so I think we need as much money as possible. But, above all, we need a sound policy. We need to implement the international Conventions, to look at them and to see if there is a way to go even farther and improve them. And we have to intervene, as I said, on all fronts contemporarily, with as many resources as possible, but also with the right mind attitude. We have to give back to the phenomenon the complexities that are its. The phenomenon has been simplified because it has been handled at government level by politicians, who, by definition, need a simple formula. The civil society has, in a way, handed the problem over to the *res publica*, to the government, and the problem has been handled in an administrative, bureaucratic way. Somebody has been put in charge, and a formula, a panacea, has been found.

The problem is more complicated. We need the full commitment of governments, and we need the civil society, in all its structures -- non-governmental, spontaneous, cultural -- to look into the matter and take the right attitude.

STEELE: Mr. Giacomelli, does your appointment to head the International Drug Control Programme suggest a new and more vigorous approach by the United Nations to the job ahead? In the past year you've had what I imagine to have been a difficult task of merging three bodies for drug prevention and control. What will that mean for the United Nations anti-drug effort? Can we anticipate a higher profile, new directions? Can you give us some sense of the way you would like to take the programme?

GIACOMELLI: I don't know if the fact that I was nominated means that there is the intention to have a more vigorous approach, but certainly the intention, the determination of a more vigorous approach is behind the creation of the programme I've been requested to put together. After the last few years of intense study, consideration and scrutiny of the problem, the conclusion was reached that, against the current trend of streamlining and cutting down, the United Nations needed a new programme at the USG level, and that in itself gives an idea of what degree of priority this has in the mind of Member States. And indeed, drugs, as you know, have been placed among the top five priorities of the current medium-term plan. So that should imply -- if coherence should prevail, as I hope -- that there is the determination, based on the understanding that the problem has become one of such a nature, has become one of the global issues for which the United Nations are considered the only answer. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war, we have said so many times that the United Nations now has a new profile -- it has

extraordinary new challenges, possibilities, and also dangers to face.

STEELE: Speaking of Eastern Europe, if I may pursue your train of thought, what impact has the turmoil in Eastern Europe had on drug trafficking on the Balkan route? What opportunities --

GIACOMELLI: Extremely serious. Extremely serious. I sent -- almost immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union -- a high-level mission to touch base with seven of the new republics, upon their request, their being immediately very worried; they came to us asking for advise, counsel, and to establish contact. And it is very clear that we have all the ingredients for a new, very serious, sensitive area in drug abuse, in all its aspects.

STEELE: Because of the fragmentation of the economy, the social dislocation?

GIACOMELLI: Yes, yes, that's right. A number of reasons. Production, because this has been the cradle of poppies, after all, central Asia; traffic, because we have countries with fragile institutions not yet equipped, not organized, without borders -- borders traced only on the map, because they belonged to one unit; and we have a tremendous need of economic resources. So the temptation would be huge. And we have already very high criminality, which is related, at a very high percentage -- we could say something between 70 and 80 per cent -- to drug abuse. And then we have political and military turmoil, and we know that this is a very fertile ground for drug abuse and for traffic.

FASULO: Mr. Giacomelli, turning to demand, what portion of the world's demand for drugs comes from the United States?

GIACOMELLI: It is becoming increasingly difficult to answer this question. Of course, we know that the United States has the sad privilege of being one of the largest markets. That is due also to the size of the country, the financial means available in the country. So we consider that the United State represents the largest market -- I wouldn't venture percentages, but the largest market, certainly almost the sole significant market as far as cocaine is concerned. But things are changing fast. Europe is picking up, certainly on heroin, but increasingly in cocaine. The traffickers are looking for new markets. And we know already that the European police forces are seizing larger and larger quantities of cocaine that you don't yet find in the street. This is exactly what happened in the United States about 20 years ago. There is always a phenomenon of inertia; in the beginning you don't really see it, but you already have the indicators that it will explode.

But this is not the most important aspect. The most important aspect is the tremendous epidemic of abuse which is spreading like brush fire in the third world. And there, of course, the statistics, the data we have, are very incomplete. It is a relatively new phenomenon. Some drugs have been circulating since time immemorial everywhere, but now, in Latin America, in Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia -- think of Pakistan, where we have some of the largest markets -- Pakistan almost overnight found herself with something between 1 and 2 million heroin addicts. And we have the big cities, both in the north and the south, which have become seriously affected by epidemics.

In Latin America, you have abuse of, above all, a form of *basuco*, not so much cocaine; *basuco* is coca paste, and it is smokeable, terribly addictive, and a very dangerous substance. And it is moving at a tremendous speed. I spoke with the police

forces of several Latin American countries; they almost trace on the map how many miles it gains every day in countries like Chile, for instance, or certainly Brazil. And so the market is becoming wider and wider, and this in a way diminishes the sad privilege of being first for the United States, not so much because here it has decreased -- there have been a few changes in the pattern, but I wouldn't venture to say that the problem has really gone down -- but because it is spreading in many other places.

LITTLEJOHNS: The programme is **WORLD CHRONICLE**, our guest is Giorgio Giacomelli, Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. Do you have another question, Linda?

FASULO: The other question I have is do you work with the United States? What kind of interaction is there between your agency and the US in dealing with the drug problem?

GIACOMELLI: From very many points of view. The United States are a member of the UN; they are one of the countries that has, as I say, a very serious problem; they've been among the first to be aware and worried about this problem; and they are a major donor country for the program. So from every point of view, we interact very much with the United States.

IGARZA: Mr. Giacomelli, the General Assembly is discussing these days a report of the Security Council known as "Agenda for Peace". And one of the possibilities to impose peace is the use of military forces around the world by the United Nations. Could you support this idea, the use of international military forces to combat illicit trafficking as a danger for peace around the world?

GIACOMELLI: As you know, this is being discussed. And it has not made much progress so far because several countries are concerned about their sovereignty. They consider that while cooperation with the United Nations should be welcome, it should be voluntary and based on a deal, an understanding, an agreement between an individual country and the United Nations Drug Control Programme. But there are more and more suggestions related to international tribunals and international police forces, and these might eventually materialize one day. I think what would be necessary would be to open the way to increased international full-fledged cooperation through adherence to treaties, regional and sub-regional agreements, and master plans, as we call it -- understanding among countries that share the same problem along common borders; and through such treaties to voluntarily accept a certain attenuation of sovereignty, based on bilateral or trilateral agreements. And this gradually would expand and hopefully become a commonly accepted new form of cooperation.

IGARZA: The United Nations is facing a very deep financial crisis. Does that affect your programme?

GIACOMELLI: It does not yet affect the programme, but of course I think we have reason to be concerned, as does everyone else. In fact, the fund of the programme has been increasing very fast in the past few years. But we know that these phenomena are subject to something that I would call "fashion". So now drugs have been very high on the list of priorities. Should we assume that the trend continues, our resources should continue to grow very fast. This is not necessarily so.

What I am more interested in, apart from doing whatever I can to secure the funds that I will need to respond to the increasing challenges I have to face and the increasing things

I am requested to do, is to involve the whole international community, especially other international organizations, to join in the effort. I think that reaching the critical mass of resources that will make sense and will make a difference in the fight against drugs cannot be achieved through increasing my budget indefinitely, because what we need is a dimension that can be reached only if we join efforts. If the World Bank, UNDP, IFAD --

LITTLEJOHNS: IFAD, what's that?

GIACOMELLI: IFAD is the Fund for Agricultural Development, it's an international financial institution based in Rome. If the World Bank, UNDP, IFAD, the Inter-American Development Bank and all the other organizations would accept placing drugs among the elements that they consider for drawing their plans of action.... And we have already started to work together with a few of them, and this is the future, I think. We should not work in isolation. The most important part of our mandate is coordination. We know how difficult it is. But, by coordination I also mean working together, and having drugs as one of the main elements considered for whatever programme of assistance is put together in the countries where drugs are a serious problem.

STEELE: We see that already in the field of health; and in Southeast Asia and Thailand, as we saw in the film that opened the show today, the level of HIV infection and AIDS has become an overlay issue on the drug epidemic. How are you responding within the context of your programme to meet the need to combat AIDS transmission through drug abuse?

GIACOMELLI: We work in very close contact with the World Health Organization on this, and particularly in Southeast Asia we have

already been introducing what has become one of the tenets of our strategy: to have a global approach, to have projects that deal with the different aspects -- production, traffic, abuse, in all its aspects -- and, therefore, health. As we are speaking of Southeast Asia, there we have already succeeded -- something that I consider in itself a great achievement; we managed to put together countries that are sharing borders in the Golden Triangle -- China, Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos is joining now -- to sign a common agreement and accept common projects that largely are financed by the Programme, and to work together. I believe this is probably the only approach that can achieve some substantial result.

FASULO: Mr. Giacomelli, what are your views on legalizing drugs? Have there been any countries that have successfully dealt with a particular kind of drug in this context?

GIACOMELLI: In the first place, I have to say that as the custodian of the international Conventions, until the Conventions are changed, I have to stick to my guns do whatever is in my power to make sure that they are all ratified and fully implemented. And they speak fairly clearly. Of course, the Conventions, as you know, are a framework that leaves to the individual Member States a certain flexibility as to how they want to deal with what are, more or less, domestic matters. So this is, let's say, an institutional position.

On the substance of the debate to which you refer, that is becoming quite hot in some countries, above all the European countries. And while I have the duty, I suppose, to have my own ideas, in the first place I think we should deal with this debate in a more rigorous way. What we have seen has been an exchange of apodictic, of positions reduced to simple formula, a

panacea: to legalize, not to legalize, decriminalize. I think this is not the way in which the problem should be examined. All I request is that it is done in a more rigorous way, based on a serious analysis. What are the real consequences? What are the experiences we have had? We should, above all, speak in terms not of legalization or non-legalization, but what type of control different countries should apply. Controls existed; they were natural controls. Drugs have been with humankind since the beginning of humankind, but there were controls. The quality of drugs, religion, the family, taboo, magic -- they contained. Now we live in a society where, due to technological development, the opening up of markets, the speed of communication and travel, and the deep crisis in which we all are in front of a world changing so fast and in front of a society that is changing so fast -- think of the big cities, think of what happens in the Bronx or in the *pueblos jovenes* in Lima, or in Karachi -- we have a completely new phenomenon: the old controls have been swept away. We need to consider what kind of controls we would like to be introduced. A simple example, to conclude: if we liberalize, what does that mean? Everybody can take whatever he wants? A pilot? A pregnant woman? A child? At what age can we begin to be free to take drugs? A taxi driver? Any driver? So the moment when you begin to consider that some kind of control has to be established, you immediately create the cracks through which there would be a black market and a traffic.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Giacomelli, that's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

Our guest has been Giorgio Giacomelli, Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. He was interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by Ian Steele, of the Press Foundation of Asia; Linda

Fasulo, of National Public Radio; and Hector Igarza of Prensa Latina.

I'm Michael Littlejohns. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

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Transcripts of the programme may be obtained free of charge by sending a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: **WORLD CHRONICLE**, United Nations, Room S-827, New York, NY 10017, USA.

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